

Final Draft November 19, 2002 – edited by Bob Freda

Meeting of the New Jersey Commission of Italian and Americans of Italian Heritage

24 October 2002

Minutes

The meeting was hosted at the Ferraro Foods Headquarters, New Jersey.

Special thanks were announced to Michael Gianmarnio Pres. & Dean J. Barcelona of Ferraro Foods

Attendance:

Commissioners

Voting Members

Larry Paragano
Joseph H. Alessi
Gilda Rorro Baldassari
Mauro Checchio
William Connell
Angelo Morresi
Tina Segali
Laura Sanguineti White
Catherine Vignale
Peter J. Cocozziello
Sal Davino

Staff:

Robert Freda, Executive Director
Frank Gargione, Advisor
Terry McIntyre, Governor's representative

Guests Mike Baldassare

Public

Michael Cino, Columbus Coalition
Rose Feterik, Representative of Commission of Social Justice
Sam Fumoza, Special Project Chair – Commission of Social Justice
Jo Shenman, Videographer

Agenda:

I. & II. Call to Order by the presiding Chair and Attendance

Larry Paragano, chair, called the meeting to order at 3:25 p.m.

III. Public Portion Guests

Michael Cino presented draft resolutions for the following:

1. Resolution through Bergen and Salem counties for local boards of education to implement Italian language in third grade in New Jersey public schools.
2. Grant program from the Italian Consulate providing one-half of a teacher of Italian salary for three years. Its organization wants to see 100 teachers in 100 towns. They are desirous in working in conjunction with the New Jersey State Department of Education on this effort.

Peter Coccoziello queried if this initiative was only targeted to public schools. Larry Paragano appointed Gilda Rorro Baldassari to work with the Columbus Coalition and to develop a report at the next meeting.

Larry Paragano introduced Ms. Jo Shenman, Videographer for cable TV in New Jersey and Manhattan. She produced a video of the *Sbandieratori e Musici di Piansano* (Viterbo), Italy, part of a cultural exchange between Mercer and Ocean counties, initiated by Gilda Rorro Baldassari and Mario Marano. She intends to air the video on 3, one-half-hour programs. Gilda Rorro Baldassari suggested that the video be shown at a future committee meeting and that Ms. Shenman be a guest speaker for CIAO (Community of Italian American Organizations) member, the Italian American National Hall of Fame in Mercer County.

IV. Approval of previous meeting minutes

Prior to approval of minutes, Dr. William Connell spoke of the Board of Academic Advisors to the Italian and Italian American Heritage Institute. He disseminated a report to Institute trustees, and mentioned that Dr. Joseph Seneca, acting president of Rutgers University, agrees with the goals of the Institute. He indicated that Joseph Scelsa of the John Colandara Center at the Cuny system was attempting to establish an Italian museum in New York. He is Dean of Queens College and the Director of a television program on Italian American issues.

Larry Paragano asked for a motion to except the minutes. They were approved by Peter Coccoziello and seconded by Mauro Checchio.

V. Chairman report

Larry Paragano informed the group that he wrote a letter to the Governor regarding the Commission's accomplishments to date.

VI. Executive Director Report

Bob Freda asked that a new e-mail address should be used to communicate with him at the Institute. rfreda@iahi.rutgers.edu. Vita Semeraro will be the new office manager for the Institute. She will begin on 4 November 2002. Bob Freda working with Frank Gargione and a consultant from Dale Florio's office Princeton Public Affairs, to develop a folder with a packet of information regarding the Commission. Bob is undertaking a study with the pro bono services of PinG Internet Co. to determine the needs and specifications for linked websites for the Commission, The Institute and The Foundation. The Department of Education (DOE) and Rutgers University will assist.

Peter Coccoziello said that he has had a discussion with New Jersey Network to produce a commercial-quality documentary on Italians in New Jersey, which will be a current, multi-month project.

VII. Treasurer Report

Bob Freda reported submitted a running account of all expenses. He has requested a monthly balance sheet report from the DOE regarding our public allocation. He reiterated that expenditures for the Commission and Institute will be scrutinized by the DOE comptroller for appropriateness and accuracy. Use of state vendors when they are available and bidding for certain expenditures are required. The Treasurer's report, and Year One Budget; NJ Italian and Americans of Italian Heritage Commission NJIAIHC and Institute, was disseminated.

Peter Coccoziello suggested that a website person be brought to the next Commission meeting and that information for all three eventual websites should be coordinated. The Commission must decide if it wants to disseminate a quarterly newsletter.

Richard Billotti said that a committee should be involved with responsibility for that work. Peter Coccoziello added that all information should be submitted, edited and reviewed prior to the January Commission meeting. Commission Chairs are responsible for input.

Robert Freda asked whether the Commission should purchase the rights to the book "The Italians of New Jersey" for \$650 from the New Jersey Historical Society, according to the terms previously agreed and negotiated in July by William Connell, since Mr. Freda had not yet been able to issue a check to effect the purchase. Larry Paragano put the question to the Commission. Gilda Rorro Baldassari suggested that the book be purchased and kept as is. It was agreed, as at previous meetings, that Mr. Freda should purchase the rights. Discussion then turned to the arrangements previously made by Mr. Connell with the Commission's approval to republish the book through Bordighera Press of Florida, with a new title page crediting the Commission and a new preamble (which Mr. Connell had volunteered to write). Mr. Connell explained that he had negotiated for this to be done at a cost of \$5000. 1000 copies would be printed, 500 of which would belong to the Commission, with the remainder being left to Bordighera Press to sell on the market. Mr. Freda expressed his opinion that the book needed to be updated not just reprinted with a new preamble. Mr. Connell said to do this would cost substantially more than the \$5000 previously authorized; it would involve significant new delays; and it would mean going back on the arrangements he had already negotiated with the Commission's approval during the summer. He explained that the book was supposed to have been reissued in December 2003, but since the Commission still hadn't paid its bill for the rights from the Historical Society from the summer, the project was on hold. Mr. Coccoziello proposed that the question of what to do should be delegated to a working group. Mr. Paragano appointed a working group on this issue consisting of Commissioners Connell, White and Baldassari and Executive Director Freda.

VIII. Committee Reports

a. School Curriculum and Education Committee. Gilda Rorro Baldassari provided handouts for the Curriculum Development Committee on the following:

* Action Plan

- * Cover Letter for applicants
- * Application Form

She discussed the procedure for formation of subcommittees in conjunction with the Department of Education designees.

b. **Community Relations Outreach Committee.** Chair: Richard Bilotti said that a pamphlet will be prepared by February. Peter Coccoziello added that a database must be in place and that a person must be appointed. Bob Freda said that a new office manager would get input for this project.

Community Advisory Council to The Commission co-chair Frank Gargione, said that a calendar of events, and a newsletter will be developed. He will work with co-chair Eileen Poiani.

As an aside, Larry Paragano acknowledged the honor received by Frank Gargione in Genoa, Italy. Mr. Gargione received a gold medal of Christopher Columbus for his outstanding work on satellite communications.

c. **Governmental Relations Outreach Committee.** Angelo Moressi spoke with Joseph Seneca at Rutgers, and stated that there is a need to identify additional funding for the Institute. He added that there is a need to approach the Legislative Appropriations Committee and Rutgers University. Larry Paragano asked about the appointed terms of Commissioners, he wanted to know who's appointed by whom and what is the term of each Commissioner? Angelo Moressi added that he will contact individuals and ask how long they want to serve. The law is not clear on that issue. Larry Paragano added that he has an appointment with the Governor. During that time he will seek answers regarding the reappoint of Commissioners. Meanwhile, Terry McIntyre will look into the matter before the next Commission meeting. He will examine the Sunshine law and notification regarding meeting announcements. Richard Billotti stated that the Senate President and Assembly Speakers should also be contacted and that recommendations be made to them.

Angelo Moressi disseminated the following handouts:

Certificate of Incorporation of the Institute

Initial resolutions of the Board of Trustees Institute of Italian and Italian American Heritage Studies, Inc.

Outline to the Bylaws

Angelo Moressi stated a need to appoint officers of the Institute. Bob Freda reminded the group that the Commissioners are the Trustees of the Institute. Larry Paragano appointed the following officers of the Institute's Board of Trustees:

Gilda Rorro Baldassari and Bill Connell will serve as Co Chairs of the Institute

Richard Bilotti Vice Chair, Lisa Segali as Treasurer and Joe Alessi, as Secretary. A motion was made to except all nominations. Joe Alessi made and Laura Sanguineti White seconded the motion.

d. Higher Education Committee. Chair: Dr. Marisa Trubiano was absent. A handout of goals that she developed was distributed.

e. International and Public Awareness Achievement Program Committee. Larry Paragano said that he will explore international trade through the Commission.

f. Development and Funding Committee. Chair: Peter Coccoziello. Peter Coccoziello mentioned that his objective was to have a Founders Group for the **Italian American**

Heritage Foundation, an independent 501c3 organization that can help fund the work of the Institute and other worthwhile Italian Cultural/Civic Organizations. Members of the Founders group would donate \$5,000 per year for a five-year period. Three to four hundred thousand dollars has been pledged to date. He approximates that he will raise \$1,250,000.00 from sixty individuals. He shared that the next step would be to target a larger audience and that income should generate from the 1.5 million Italian Americans in New Jersey. There would be an annual fundraising event and a publication would be sent to contributors. He anticipated revenue ranging from \$300,000 to \$600,000 dollars for this effort. He has prepared stationery and plans a fundraising dinner in the spring. Letterhead will be printed. Larry Paragano added that a checking account exists and that money should be put into it.

g. Sensitivity Awareness Committee. Chair: Tina Segali disseminated a revised Mission Statement and Goals and Objectives. She wanted to focus on positive aspects of Italian culture and contributions. She suggested a public mailing list be developed and information disseminated.

IX. The Italian and Italian American Heritage Institute

See item c above. Bob Freda explained the following to the Commission:

The Institute is a creation of the Commission the purpose of which is to carry out the programs and operations of the Commission. Because it is a 501c3 entity it must have its own meetings, which require that the Commissioners act in a different capacity, legally speaking, as the Board of Governors for the Institute. Accordingly to streamline the procedural relationship between the Commission and the Institute there will be a meeting of the Institute at each of the Commission meetings. This meeting will be incorporated on a regular basis into the agenda of the Commission under the heading indicated above:

XI. New Business

A resolution was made supporting the designating that Route 80 be declared Christopher Columbus Highway. Catherine Vignale and Angelo Moressi moved and seconded the resolution.

Gilda Rorro Baldassari shared a newspaper clipping from the Trentonian Newspaper highlighting the Italian Troupe *Sbandierati e Musici di Piansano* (Viterbo), Italy. Richard Bilotti and Gilda Rorro Baldassari will prepare a gift to send to the Italian artists.

Larry Paragano would like to explore the establishment of a new physical site for the *Casa Italiana* at Rutgers University.

Bob Freda reminded the Commissioners that **only the appointed Commissioners** can make motions, second and vote on such motions. Staff and advisors are exempt.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40pm. A motion to adjourn was approved by Sal Davino and Catherine Vignale.

Submitted by
Dr. Gilda Rorro Baldassari